Technology Fields Too Slowly

It truly amazes me how technology is woven into the tapestry of our culture. The latest threads of American and global culture are portable computing devices. A year ago I would have never believed that a silly thing called Blackberry was capable of making me do work at 10 p.m. on a regular basis. Ten years ago, none of us knew that it was possible to survive life without a cell phone. Sadly, it also amazes me how slowly the same technology permeates our warfighters' culture, thus capability. The reasons include challenges in securing wireless data, interoperability issues, operating environments, reliability, bureaucracy, and many more. It strikes me as odd that a casual weekend fisherman can see a twig or ditch in 3-D color on depth finders, check the latest weather information with animated Doppler radar, mark his fishing targets within a couple of feet using an onboard relative global positioning system, pull up a navigation map to safely return to the landing, call his wife to coordinate boat docking, and order replacements for all the lures he snagged while waiting for his trailer, yet many of our warfighters don't have the breadth of a fisherman's capability in their hands. As you read this month's CROSSTALK and think about portable computing devices, ask yourself, "How can we do our part to effectively field this technology?"

Kevin Stamey
Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center, Co-Sponsor

Computing Permeates Our Society

This month's CROSSTALK focuses on information you should know whether you're buying a personal digital assistant, protecting your home computer, designing or writing programs, or improving your processes. It is interesting to watch some technologies fade away while others continue to evolve. It appears only the strong survive, but the required strengths vary from technology to technology. In the debate over video formats, many believed Beta was better, but VHS had a stronger market niche. Today, basic cell phones are passé – everyone wants a picture phone (or so the commercials imply).

We asked Col. Kenneth L. Alford to write his article, *Handheld Computing*, due to the interesting work at the U.S. Military Academy where he taught. Examples include network analysis that looks for new ways to automatically recognize computer network attacks, and a computerized mapping project that shows how digital mapping, terrain, and unit data can be integrated to show warfighters a more complete picture on the ground. Terry Bollinger's article, *How to Secure Windows PCs and Laptops*, was provided to help both home computer users and companies better secure their computers. We also target more advanced development with Rick McCabe's and Mike Polen's article, *Effective Practices for Object-Oriented System Software Architecting*. Lynn Sanderfer, David Herron, David Garmus, Dr. Babak Makkinejad, and Paul Kimmerly also provide basic practices and advice aimed at both novice and advanced programmers. Since only the strong survive in today's fast-moving technologies, which do you want to keep and which do you want to do away with?

Elizabeth Starrett
Associate Publisher

Note of Appreciation: We at CROSSTALK extend our appreciation to Walt Lipke as he retires from government service at the end of June. Throughout the years, Mr. Lipke has been a great supporter of CROSSTALK via the articles he shared and his key role in helping us secure funds for CROSSTALK until our new sponsors started their support. We will miss Mr. Lipke's support in the government sector, but look forward to more words of wisdom via future CROSSTALK articles.